



*Last updated: February 15, 2018*

This Factsheet and Frequently Asked Questions provides information about the evolution of the Field of Interest Grants program at Vancouver Foundation.

## Background

Vancouver Foundation grants approximately \$50 million per year to charities across British Columbia. Most of these funds are directed by our donors to support charitable services, programs, and operating costs. Our Community Grants programs, including Field of Interest Grants, distribute the remaining discretionary funds based upon the charitable causes identified by our donors.

Since 2015, we have focused our Field of Interest Grants program on funding projects within these charitable causes that address the root causes of pressing issues, and have referred to these kinds of projects as **social innovations**. We believe these kinds of projects can make meaningful and lasting impacts in communities.

Over the last three years, we have successfully funded more projects that address the root causes of pressing issues than ever before. At the same time, we have also received a significant number of applications that did not focus on addressing the root cause of an issue. This concerns us, because it represents a lot of time and energy for unsuccessful applicants, and has led to some frustration and disappointment.

So, we've asked ourselves how we can improve the program. We've listened to feedback from grant applicants, our volunteer expert advisors who evaluate applications, our board members, and many other stakeholders. We heard that while many people understood our funding intentions, others did not. We also heard that the language associated with social innovation was a barrier for some, as was choosing a field of interest for others.

Based on the feedback we've received, we're making some changes so that the purpose of our funding is clearer, and so that our application process is streamlined and better supported.

## Evolving Field of Interest Grants to two new grant programs

Vancouver Foundation is enhancing the way we respond to community needs by evolving our current Field of Interest Grants to two new grant programs.

**(1) Participatory Action Research Grants** – will support research that is co-led by community members and researchers to learn more about the root causes of pressing issues impacting the health of communities.

The research must be a collaboration between community organizations and institutions with access to an ethics board, such as universities.

There will be two different grant types available under Participatory Action Research Grants, depending upon the stage of your project.

- **Convene:** short-term grants to help teams develop a participatory research project plan that can be submitted to funding organizations.
- **Investigate:** multi-year grants to help teams answer a research question, analyze their findings, and share knowledge in a way that supports the community to take action in the future.



(2) **Systems Change Grants** – will support projects that take action to address the root causes of pressing issues by influencing the behaviours of populations, organizations, and institutions.

There will be three different grant types available, depending upon the stage of your project.

- **Develop:** short-term grants to help teams generate ideas and a project plan for systems change that can be submitted to funders.
- **Test:** multi-year grants to help project teams test their influence on systems, and learn what works.
- **Scale:** multi-year grants to help project teams extend the influence of an existing systems change project to a different scale within the system.

*Applications for Systems Change Grants will still be accepted from any of our previous fields of interest, and for any other charitable purpose as well.*

### Improving support for grant applicants

Over the coming months we will make several improvements to support grant applicants. Our new grant programs will provide clearer guidelines, more staff support, fewer documents to review, more predictable grant cycles, and a new online application process.

*In the meantime, all current grantees will continue to receive funding according to their existing agreements.*

### What happens next

Throughout the spring we will provide further details on our website, host community workshops, and answer questions on the new grant programs.

*We will add more information to our website in May, and open for applications in July 2018.*

### Stay up-to-date

We will publish updates regarding our new grant programs, as new information becomes available.

[Sign up for our 'Grant Alerts' email newsletter to stay up-to-date.](#)



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **1. Why is Vancouver Foundation evolving the Field of Interest Grants program?**

We recognize that applying for a grant—any grant—requires a lot of time and energy. By evolving our program, we are clarifying the purpose of our grants and reducing the number of “boxes” applicants must choose between.

In other words, our new programs will allow applicants to focus on how their project can make meaningful and lasting change on pressing issues – regardless of the “charitable field” that project is working within.

We believe these changes will save our grant applicants time, and reduce the number of applications we receive that are unlikely to receive funding.

### **2. Is Vancouver Foundation still focused on funding social innovation through this program?**

Yes. We believe these kinds of projects can make meaningful and lasting impacts in communities.

Social innovation remains the overarching concept behind our Participatory Action Research Grants and Systems Change Grants, and will be introduced in our new program guidelines in May.

### **3. Which “fields” apply to Participatory Action Research Grants, and which apply to Systems Change Grants?**

By simplifying our approach, grant applicants no longer need to decide which “field” is right for them. If a project uses a Participatory Action Research methodology, it should be submitted under Participatory Action Research Grants. Applications for Systems Change Grants can come from any “field” or charitable purpose.

### **4. Will these changes affect any applications currently in-progress?**

No.

### **5. When will new program guidelines be available to review?**

We anticipate adding new program guidelines (including examples of our revised application forms) to our website in May 2018.

### **6. When will the new grants programs open for application? What is the next deadline for applications?**

We anticipate opening for new applications at the beginning of July 2018, with the deadline closing later that month.

### **7. How often will each grant type accept applications each year?**

This year, Test, Scale and Investigate applications will open once – in July. In 2019, these grant types will open twice (spring / fall).

Applications for Develop and Convene grant types will be accepted at any time of the year, beginning in July.

### **8. How long will it take to review grant applications?**

Most applicants will receive feedback within six to eight weeks after the deadline, which may include being invited forward to a second stage in the process.

Develop and Convene applications have only one-stage. Applicants will receive a decision at the end of the following month – *for example an application made in January will receive a decision by the end of February.*

Test, Scale and Investigate have two-stages. Applicants will receive feedback within six to eight weeks after the deadline, and some applicants will be invited to submit a second more detailed application.

*Applicants in July will receive a final decision by the beginning of December.*



**9. Who will review my application?**

Vancouver Foundation staff review all applications. We also recruit Volunteer Advisors – experts in different areas of work – to evaluate grant applications and recommend which projects to fund.

**10. Are there any other grant programs to apply for at Vancouver Foundation?**

Not at this time. However, we anticipate adding a new Youth Engagement Grants program in fall 2018.

**11. When will more information be available?**

More information about the new grants programs will be published on our website in May 2018.

If you have a question about an existing grant, please contact your grant administrator, or contact us at [info@vancouverfoundation.ca](mailto:info@vancouverfoundation.ca)